

2 Samuel 24 - Thursday, August 13th, 2015

- Tonight we come to the last chapter in 2 Samuel, which will be continued in the next books of 1st and 2nd Kings and Chronicles.
- By that I mean the books of Samuel Kings and Chronicles are a continued narrative of sorts of the history of the nation of Israel.
- As such, we have before us a most interesting and even challenging chapter as it relates to God judging both Israel and David.

1 Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

- Right out of the chute here in verse one, we have some difficulties to work through the first of which has to do with God's anger.
- The question is, what was the sin that Israel and or David committed that had so aroused the anger of the Lord against them.
- The thought is that God's anger was due to the Israelites having joined Absalom in their rebellion against both David and God.

- Lest one think that a rebellion on the part of the Israelites wouldn't rise to the level of warranting God's judgment, think Moses.
- When his cousin Korah rebelled against him, Numbers 16 tells us thousands of Israelites died as a result of God's judgment.
- Prior to Korah's rebellion, his own sister and brother Miriam and Aaron also rebelled against him in Numbers chapter twelve.

- The reason I point this out is because Numbers 12:9 reads almost verbatim like 2 Samuel 24:1 concerning the Lord's anger.

Numbers 12:9 (NKJV) — 9 So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed.

- Here is where I'm headed with this, if God's anger against Israel was because of Absalom's rebellion, then, it all makes sense.
- More specifically, everything that we're about to see in this chapter is more understandable as the consequences of rebellion.
- At the risk of overthinking this, if it weren't because of rebellion, then there's more of a difficulty in understanding this chapter.

- The next difficulty that we need to work through is we're led to believe that the Lord Himself is the one who made David do this.
- In other words, it would seem that the Lord is the one Who in His anger moved David to take a census of both Israel and Judah.
- The problem with this interpretation is that God cannot tempt us to do evil nor will He ever be a party to our sinning against Him.
- In order to resolve this difficulty, we need look no further than to 1 Chronicles 21:1, where we find the answer to our problem.

1 Chronicles 21:1 (NKJV) — 1 Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.

Pastor Chuck Smith of this said, "Now the 'he' there, we assume would be the Lord. But as we find out in 1 Chronicles, chapter one, it was Satan that moved David's heart, to the numbering of the people. So God opened the door, and allowed Satan to move in and tempt David."

- I suppose this may bring up another difficulty, such that, God will often times allow Satan to move in and tempt us as Christians.
- While on its face it may seem disconcerting, however, we need to realize that this will always serve God's purpose in the end.
- Peter is one of the best examples of the Lord allowing Satan to tempt us in order to glorify Himself and better us in the process.

Luke 22:31–32 (NIV) — 31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

- It's important to note Satan must ask for permission before he so much as touches a hair on our head, for those who have hair.
- Like Peter, such is the case with David here in verse one. Simply put, Satan was given permission to tempt David to do this.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that God allowed Satan to tempt David so as to mete out judgment for the sin of rebellion.

Charles Spurgeon offers us some tremendous insight concerning this, "In the book of Chronicles, Satan is said to have provoked David to this deed, and so indeed he did, and thus the moral evil of the action belongs to the tempter and his ready victim; but the writer of the present passage saw the hand of the Lord in it, using the sin of David as the means of punishing the sins of the people. Both statements are true and there is no need to attempt a reconciliation, since one truth must agree with another whether we see it or not."

- Before we move on to verse two, there's one more matter that I think we would do well to clear up in order to better understand.
- It has to do with a census rising to the level of sinning against God as it is here. The question being, is taking a census a sin?
- This because, we do find census taking in scripture that was not a sin against God but instead, actually a command from God.

Exodus 30:11–12 (NKJV) — 11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12 "When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.

- Here is the answer to our dilemma, the only time a census was to be taken was when God commanded that their be a census.
- Conspicuously absent from the narrative is any mention of God commanding him to do this, which is why it was a sin to do so.
- Moreover, the principle of census taking was related to one counting that which belonged to him. Israel did not belong to David.

Charles Spurgeon - "According to the law of Moses, a piece of money as a sin-offering was to be offered by every Israelite when the tribes were counted, but this was neglected. Moses numbered the people at God's bidding, considering them to be the Lord's people, but David counted them at his own will, as if they were his own people, and this the Lord would not endure."

2 So the king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people, that I may know the number of the people." 3 And Joab said to the king, "Now may the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times more than there are, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?" 4 Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army. Therefore Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel.

- Here we're told that even David's men knew that what he was doing was wrong, which begs the question of, why David does it.
- Why does David want to count the numbers of his military? Answer, because he has started to trust in the strength of numbers.
- The problem is that trusting in the strength of his numbers militarily, he has stopped trusting in his God who gave that to David.

G. Campbell Morgan - "The spirit of vainglory in numbers had taken possession of the people and the king, and there was a tendency to trust in numbers and forget God."

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most dangerous temptations for a Christian, it would have to be affluence.
- Let me explain, when God blesses and prospers us materially and financially, our tendency is to start trusting in our resources.
- The book of Proverbs is replete with warnings about the folly of trusting in anything or for that matter anyone but the Lord God.

5 And they crossed over the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the right side of the town which is in the midst of the ravine of Gad, and toward Jazer. 6 Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; they came to Dan Jaan and around to Sidon; 7 and they came to the stronghold of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Then they went out to South Judah as far as Beersheba. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9 Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men. 10 And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly." 11 Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 "Go and tell David, 'Thus says the LORD: "I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you." ' " 13 So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me." 14 And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man." 15 So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died.

- This is why we took so much time at the beginning to understand the why behind the what as it were related to God's judgment.
- Here's why, the seventy thousand men of whom we're told died because of David's census, was not arbitrary on God's part.
- I'm of the belief these seventy thousand men received their due punishment by virtue of having joined in Absalom's rebellion.

16 And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, "Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house." 18 And Gad came that day to David and said to him, "Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." 19 So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. 20 Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. 21 Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people." 22 Now Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him. Look, here are oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. 23 All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you." 24 Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25 And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.

- Notice that the plague ends when the King offers a sacrifice. This points to Jesus the greater than David about 1000 years later.
- By the way, we have recorded here the title deed as documentation that the temple mount and Jerusalem belong only to Israel.
- I cannot think of a better way to bring a study and in this case a book in the Bible to an end; the scriptures testify about Jesus.

John 5:39-40 (NIV) — 39 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.